TAFT AT MARTYR MONUMENT

JOINS IN THE HONORING OF REVOLUTIONARY HEROES.

Thousands Hear His Praise of Those Who Died in Prison Ships—War Is More Humane Now, He Says—Guardsmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Veterans Parade.

To the thousands of individually unrecorded patriots who in the period when this nation had its beginning suffered and died as prisoners in the British hulks that lay in Wallabout Bay, where the Brooklyn navy yard is now, unusual honor was paid yesterday, the President-elect, the Governor of New York, the acting Mayor of the city, 10,000 national guardsmen and as many citizens joining in the tribute. A majestic Doric column, then unveiled, stands as a memorial of their martyrdom.

The monument is in Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn, and there the eulogies were spoken. The bones of many of the martyrs are buried at its base—bones which thinly buried near the bay had been recovered by those who worked for years to win for the early heroes recognition and a reward of praise. Ten thousand was the estimate of Mr. Taft of the number sacrificed; a banner that stood beside him yesterday, one that was carried in the parade on the occasion of the reburial of the bones in 1808, put their number at 11,500.

Brooklyn made of the day an occasion of great demonstration. The War Department ordered out for parade all the forces stationed in and near New York, leaving in the posts only enough for guard and other necessary duties. Nearly the entire force of the National Guard of the district turned out under the command of Major-Gen Roe who was grand marshal of the parade. Between the army and the guard the United States navy formed the second division of the big procession with contingents from the navy yard. The Grand Army, the Naval Militia, the Old Guard, the Veteran Corps of Artillery and many other bodies added to the diversity of the pageant.

The procession passed from Bedford and Division avenues by various streets to the great plaza below Fort Greene, under the monument, and there dispersed. The dedicatory services were distinct from the parade and took place on the hilltop on which the monument rests. Crowds lined the route of the procession and crowded the Fort Greene plaza. Thousands stood around the monument for two hours before Mr. Taft was due there, and they shivered and raised umbrellas against a wet snowstorm.

Stephen V. White for the Prison Ship Martyrs Association presided. An opening prayer by the Rev. S. Parkes Cadman was followed by an ode to the martyrs by Thomas Walsh, and Mr. White then presented Mr. Taft as "a distinguished citizen from Virginia last night, from Ohio the day before and from all around the world recently."

With his hat in his hand Mr. Taft said: "Mr. Chairman——"

Voices—Put on your hat. Put on your hat!

Mr. Taft—Ladies and gentlemen, I am going to put on my hat.

Voices—You bet! Go ahead! We don't want you to get cold!

Mr. Taft read his address, but he departed from it to pay a tribute to Chairman White, whose exertions to bring the movement for a monument to a successful issue he commended highly. His reference to Mr. White was greeted with loud cheers. At one side of the speaker's table in the front row of the grand stand a vacant chair was draped with the national flag in memory of Mrs. White, who died not long ago and whose devotion to the movement for the monument equalled her husband's. Mr. Taft said in part:

MR. TAFT'S SPEECH.

We are met to-day to pay a nation's debt, long since recognized but most tardily provided for. The monument which we dedicate commemorates the sacrifice for their country of the lives of upward of 10,000 Americans who were hurried more than 125 years ago into what seemed for years to be an inglorious oblivion. They died because of the cruelty of their immediate custodians and the neglect of those who higher in authority were responsible for their detention. They were the prisoners of King George the Third, captured in the war of the Revolution. Circumstances combined to make their fate harsh, cruel and sordid.

Speaking generally, their identity and personality have not been preserved, and we who assemble in grateful recollection of their patriotic self-sacrifice are compelled to refer to them as the "unknown dead." The significance of this circumstance in itself is great, for it showed the lack of system and carelessness that attended the custody of the prisoners and an indifference to their names and fate harmonizing completely with their physical treatment.

We only know of the innumerable burials under insufficient soil on the shores of Long Island near what is now the Brooklyn navy yard, and our estimate of the thousands of dead is a mere estimate.

The chief prison ship was the Jersey. We have more information in respect to the Jersey than in regard to any other, and enough to confirm in the strongest way the outrageous and indefensible cruelty with which the American prisoners were treated, resulting in the death of a large proportion of them. I do not wish to be understood as charging that these conditions were due to the premeditation of the English commanders in chief or to the set purpose of any one in authority having to do with the fate of the unfortunate men whose bravery and self-sacrifice this monument records. Such a charge would make the British commanders human monsters. The conditions were the result of neglect and not design.

The city of New York, partly by reason of its geographical situation, and in part because of its importance as a centre of political and commerical affairs, became the headquarters of the British military command and administration in America, even before the British troops were withdrawn from the vicinity of Boston, and so continued during the entire period of the Revolutionary War. Its importance from a military point of view will be better understood perhaps when I say that, save for the operations at Boston, Saratoga and the campaigns in the Carolinas and Virginia, the most important campaigns and operations of the Revolution took place within 100 miles of New York.

Some of these important and decisive events occurred almost within the shadow of the monument which we to-day dedicate to the memory of the martyred dead.

In the treatment of the prisoners taken from the American forces by the British, the British commanders found themselves much embarrassed. Technically and actually, every prisoner taken was guilty of treason and liable to prosecution for capital offence in the courts of the land. The British Government was quite indisposed, as was natural, to recognize the belligerency of the American forces, or to treat those who were captured as prisoners of war.

They were afraid of committing themselves in some way to a recognition of the existence of a war as between two independent Powers, and yet they were loath to treat all prisoners captured as punishable by death. The detention of prisoners without proceeding against them for treason in the regular courts made it impossible for friends of the prisoners to apply for writs of habeas corpus and thus embarrass the commanding officers.

The same embarrassing questions arose in our own civil war, and were solved in much the same way. However loath we were to recognize the confederation internationally as an independent power, the extent of the rebellion, which made it one of the greatest wars of modern times, required for humanity's sake that all the rules applicable to the conduct of war between two independent nations should be observed in the War of the Rebellion, and it is not too much to say that in the War of the Rebellion there was substantially the same relation as that between Great Britain and the forces of the Continental Congress.

MAKING WAR MORE HUMANE.

In the Middle Ages, and indeed down to the advent of Napoleon, death was perhaps the least of the horrors which were associated with the status of prisoners of war.

In relatively recent times the lot of the prisoner of war has been made the subject of amelioration in cartels, treaties and conventions which define the rights of the captured and the duties of the captor. The personal safety of the prisoner of war is secured, his personal possessions and belongings are protected from capture and spoliation, and offences against him are rigorously punished. The measures of restraint to which a captor may resort for the detention of prisoners cannot now take the character of primitive imprisonment.

It must be a source of gratification to all of us to learn the provisions of the Hague convention with reference to the rights of prisoners of war as they are now understood by all the signatory powers to that convention and to see that it is the duty of the capturing forces to make as ample provision for the prisoners of war as for their own men. A still more emphatic evidence of the progress that has been made and an earnest of what we may expect hereafter is to be found in the treatment of prisoners of war in the late Russian-Japanese conflict, when both parties exceeded in the tenderness and care which they gave to the prisoners of the other the requirements of the Hague convention.

This great memorial which we dedicate to-day, in the condition of things which it records and their contrast with present conditions, may properly call to mind the humane advance which has been made even in so cruel a thing as war.

IN REVOLUTIONARY TIMES.

In the arrangements for the exchange of prisoners between Gen. Washington and the British commanders soldiers were exchanged for soldiers, private citizens for private citizens and sailors for sailors. To the English and the American forces the soldier was much more valuable than the sailor. It cost the Englishmen far more to bring over soldiers and keep them in America than it did sailors, and it was much more difficult for the American authorities to secure soldiers of the line than it was to secure sailors, and especially those not sailors in the employ of the Continental Congress, but merely in private employ upon vessels engaged as privateersmen under letters of mark and reprisal, who constituted the great majority of American sailors in the war.

There was very little of the American navy except so far as it was constituted by privateersmen, and it was much more easy among an adventurous people to secure the employment of sailors upon privateersmen who generally shared in the proceeds of prizes than it was to obtain enlisted men in the army; hence almost all the exchnages were of British soldiers, soldiers of the Continental line and of the State militia.

Men who were detained on the prison ships were generally those who had been captured by British vessels of war from the decks of American privateersmen. There were a great many British sailors captured by American privateersmen, and had these captives been turned over to the Congressional Government for detention they would have constituted a source from which exchanges might have been regularly effected and the men detained on the prison ships have been thus set at liberty. But the American privateersmen took no pains in this matter. They were frequently successful in inducing their British prisoners to engage themselves as American sailors in new privateering enterprises.

JUSTIFYING WASHINGTON'S ACTION.

I stop here to allude to a charge made by the British against Washington and the American authorities in order to relieve themselves from responsibility for the awful loss of life occurring in their prison hulks. They say, as is true, that the British authorities offered to exchange the prisoners detained in the prison hulks for British soldiers held by the American forces in American prisons, and that this offer was declined.

It was declined by Washington first on the ground that he had no authority over naval prisoners. Later on it appears that such an exchange might have been made by Washington had he desired to do so, but his position evidently was that he could not afford, in the interests of the cause for which he was fighting, to aid the British by giving back to them seasoned soldiers of the line to reenforce their army in America in exchange for men who had never had experience as soldiers at all, and who were nothing but the sailors of privateersmen.

It is true that by so doing he would have been enabled to save the sufferings of his own countrymen who were detained in the prison hulks, and this shows clearly that the rights of those whose memory we here recall with gratitude were sacrificed to meet the exigencies of the country in the critical hour of her birth. But it was a balancing of Washington's obligations, and he felt it to be the higher duty to maintain that course which would weaken the enemy and ultimately drive him to peace than to relieve the sufferings, however terrible, of those of his unfortunate countrymen detained upon prison hulks.

We must justify Washington in this conclusion, just exactly as we must justify Grant in refusing the exchange of prisoners at a time, in August, 1864, when the sufferings of Andersonville were held up before him as a reason for making such an exchange. But it was a critical moment in the history of the war, and he knew better than any one else could how much of strength he was withholding from the rebel army by refusing to give back to them the men who would fill up their ranks from Northern prisons.

SUFFERINGS OF THE PRISONERS.

What should be emphasized, however, is that the refusal of Washington and the American authorities to make the exchange proposed was not the slightest justification for the neglect and cruelty with which the prisoners of war upon the prison hulks were treated. It is impossible to determine exactly who was responsible for the lack of food and its insufficient quality and quantity which was furnished. There is evidence that the orders were that two-thirds of the daily food furnished to British sailors was to be furnished to these prisoners, but certain it is that the bread and meat and dried vegetables which were furnished were so wormeaten and rotten as to provide but little sustenance. That these abuses arose probably from the fraud and cupidity of the guards and immediate attendants is probable, but the officers in higher authority cannot escape the responsibility that is necessarily at their door for a failure to order constant inspection and to protect the human beings whose lives, as they must have known, were being sacrificed from day to day by the awful environment in which they were compelled to live.

Thousands and thousands of the victims were buried on the shores of Wallabout Bay, not more than 500 yards from the ship, and buried in such an insufficient way that the recurring tides disclosed their bodies to the air and washed their bones further upon the shore.

THE COUNTRY'S APPRECIATION.

We know this: The men who were there confined were Americans who generally had taken service on privateers to destroy the British commerce and to hamper the British operations upon the sea, and who after their confinement were offered the opportunity of betraying their allegiance to the cause of the revolution by enlisting in the British navy and engaging in the suppression of the war against their own people. We know that they with but few exceptions preferred the death which was present to them every day in their lives upon those prison ships to the dishonor of deserting the cause of their country.

This noble memorial is dedicated as a reminder to living Americans of the gratitude due to unknown sufferers in our country's cause and as an inspiration to future unselfish and unheralded sacrifice to maintain our institutions of liberty and civilization.

After Mr. Taft's oration Secretary of War Wright on behalf of the national Government, made the presentation of the monument to the State of New York, "in tribute," he said, "to those who near this spot gave up their lives to a sacred cause and went to unknown and forgotten graves."

When later Mr. Wright, who is of the South, spoke of the monument as "in memory of those Yankee rebels who spurned liberty or even life at the expense of honor," Mr. Taft smiled broadly at the phrase "Yankee rebels" and looked up quickly and sympathetically at the Secretary of War.

"Gov. Hughes," said Mr. Wright, and the Governor of New York arose from his seat beside him, "I transfer to you as representative of the State of New York—the scene of the consecration and sacrifice to which this noble monument bears witness—this monument to the prison ship martyrs of the Revolution. These, sir, are the keys."

Gov. Hughes accepted the keys, and as the Twenty-third Regiment band played the well known largo of Handel everybody who was seated arose and the men doffed hats. Miss Esther King Norton, granddaughter of Gen. Horatio C. King, drew a cord and the national colors which had screened the monument came slowly down, uncovering it to the leaden skies, and a salute of thirteen guns covered the assemblage with smoke.

In the front row of the grand stand beside the speakers stood Quartermaster-Sergeant James Elkins Cleveland of the Forty-seventh Regiment—whose great-grandfather, James Elkins, died in one of the prison ships—guarding a banner which had been carried in the reburial ceremonies of 1808 and which Sergt. Cleveland's grandfather had afterward purchased. The banner holds this inscription:

Mortals avaunt
11,500
spirits of the martyred
brave approach the tomb
of honor, of glory
of victorious patriotism.

While the smoke of the salute was still thick three cheers were given for the martyrs, and then Gov. Hughes spoke in accepting the keys which he was later to turn over to the city. He said in part:

Fortunate is the people whose soil has been the scene of patriotic service and of heroic devotion to a noble cause. We cannot afford to be indifferent to examples of fortitude or to lose by forgetfulness the stimulus of the lessons of sacrifice.

We commemorate to-day not the deeds of great men or of those possessed of surpassing talent or extraordinary power. This is a monument to the service and sacrifice of those whose chief distinction is not that of fortune or condition or of superior position, talent or opportunity, but who revealed in deepest distress and in the agony of body and soul the qualities which dignify our common humanity. It was the plain man, the simple patriot, who in the lowest depths of misery in the prison ship refused his freedom at the cost of his allegiance to the cause of liberty.

Humanity has not changed its values. And it still reserves its highest honors for those who in the fire of affliction reveal the pure gold of unselfish loyalty to principle. And because this is after all the common sentiment and the sure reserve of our national strength, we face the future with confidence.

Patrick F. McGowan, President of the Board of Aldermen, and Michael J. Kennedy, on behalf of the Department of Parks, followed with their official acceptances, and Grand Sachem Cohalan of Tammany Hall told of Tammany's efforts, dating from 1808, to secure from Congress proper recognition of the memory of the victims of the prison ships. The ceremonies closed with a prayer by the Rev. John L. Belford and taps and salute by Union prisoners of the War of the Rebellion.

Mr. Taft on his arrival yesterday afternoon at Jersey City was taken by tug to the Brooklyn navy yard, where Rear Admiral Goodrich met him and accompanied him to the Brooklyn Club, where there was a luncheon in honor of Mr. Taft, which was attended by Gov. Hughes, Gov. Fort of New Jersey, Gov. Lee of Delaware, Rear Admiral Goodrich, the Rev. Dr. Cadman, Comptroller Metz, Bird S. Coler, Henry W. Taft, Gen. Leonard Wood, Gen. Horace Porter, Mr. Cohalan, John J. FitzGerald, Thomas Walsh, Mr. McGowan, Secretary Wright and Commissioner Kennedy, all of whom went afterward to the dedication of the monument.

After the ceremonies at Fort Greene Park Mr. Taft returned to Jersey City and took train for Washington.

IN LAST NIGHT'S CLOTHES.

Late Sitting at Rector's Followed by a Matinee in Court.

Cyril Hatch, a broker, was a prisoner in the West Forty-seventh street station from dawn yesterday until the West Side police court opened. He was in evening clothes when arraigned before Magistrate Barlow.

Hatch had been one of a theatre paty of eight which at midnight went to Rector's to sup. It was 5:30 o'clock A. M. when Hatch decided to go home. The bill of $35.20 for food and drink had not been settled. Assistant Manager Paul Perret was notified by the waiter and tried to persuade Mr. Hatch to settle. The young broker wanted the amount charged to him. Words ensued and finally blows were struck and Hatch was arrested.

Perret and a waiter swore to complaints in court, the former charging Hatch with intent to defraud his hotel and the latter with striking him. While awaiting arraignment Hatch sent a messenger with a note to Lawrence Waterbury, asking him to have "the office" send $5,000 to the uptown branch of the Knickerbocker Trust Company. The messenger was unable to find Mr. Waterbury.

Hatch was arraigned and Magistrate Barlow sent him and Perret to a private room to confer. When they returned the complaints were withdrawn and Hatch was permitted to go.

Hatch said in court that he had been in the habit of carrying an account at Rector's and was at a loss to understand why his latest bill was not charged up as he requested.